

NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

"Safety First" is "Safety Always." ~Charles M. Hayes

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CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF SAFETY, HEALTH, SECURITY & ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



NOAA SECO's Annual Safety & Environmental Professionals Workshop

in Silver Spring, Maryland

The Safety & Environmental Office (SECO) hosted the annual 3 day workshop of NOAA's Safety and Environmental professionals at our headquarters office in Silver Spring, MD from May 22 ~ 24. This is the first time the workshop was held at this campus.

The 40 attendees and instructors, representing all line and staff offices, spent the 3 days being updated on new Executive Order (EO), review of recent citations, results of assessments and future projects.

Of special note was the orientation involving the recently upgraded incident web-based reporting and investigation system that allows NOAA personnel to perform nearly all incident investigations on line. Also presented were updates on new safety related policies, the new web based training system and plans for FY08.

"Much was learned by the 3 day interactions of the group, as was provided by the formal presentations."

- John Pierson, SECO Director

OH NO.... June is Safety Month (Again)



Oh my gosh its safety month again, so we better be careful. Watch out...here is the safety man again...stop what are you doing until he passes. I can't wait until June is over. Why do we have to do it this way? It's a lot cheaper the old way. We can't afford all this safety training. We are the federal government!...we don't have to comply.

These comments are from locations that don't have a good safety program. Excuses come in all colors and sizes, but the bottom line for NOAA is that we can't afford **not** to implement the strongest and best safety program. Over and over again, a solid safety program, where everyone is well trained and keeps an eye on the actions of co-workers, has paid major dividends in reduced incidents and their resulting claims costs.

Although new claims costs have been greatly reduced in the past 4 years, NOAA continues to pay millions of dollars to those victims of accidents that occurred as early as 1962. A simple incident is not so simple when it is a lifelong event to the victim or their heirs. Many of the victims performed unsafe activities that were either condoned or ignored in the past.

The money spent annually on claims costs could replace a small ship, provide an additional office structure or even a laboratory, or prevent us from launching a new satellite.

Safety is a critical part of every activity that all NOAA employees must use every day to perform ones tasks without injury to ones self or others. It requires a high level of training and understanding of the missions involved. Some risks cannot be avoided, but must be evaluated for their potential outcomes. Those with a high degree of hazards need to be modified to make them safer, such as wearing a face shield while grinding rather than just safety glasses. These are decisions that each and every one of us decides to take every day. If we make too many wrong decisions, and increase those high risks, we'll have more accidents.



Yes, June is safety month, but your safety is a state of mind that only you can control on a year around basis.

We celebrate our successes during NOAA Safety Day on June 19th and encourage all NOAA employees to take notice and perhaps think about their actions in a different light.



See you at the Safety Day activities planned in Kansas City, Boulder, Seattle and Silver Spring.

By Tom Altvater

Safety Seagull says...
Know the hazards of your work
and wear your appropriate per-
sonal protective equipment...



Trouble with Tritium . . . Again.

Those tritium-bearing exit signs sure are swell, aren't they? They work great, that nifty greenish-blue glow they give off is tasteful and calming, and they don't require any electricity. However, quite a number of IEM's clients have been moving away from this technology and back into the old-fashioned plug-in lighting. As such, they will soon - if not already - be "tritium free".

Why are they doing this you might ask? Well, that question was answered by our friend Frank who said to us a while back when we asked him if he was tritium-free yet: "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose" . . . giving all due credit to Chris, Janis and the Holding Company, of course. In other words, the problems associated with losing track of one 'o those exit signs overshadowed Frank's satisfaction with having that nice greenish-blue glow to illuminate dark and scary places.

And that, readers, brings us to the point of this article, which is a Regulatory Issue Summary (RIS) released by the USNRC early this month. In response to complaints from the States of Pennsylvania and New Jersey about improper disposal of exit signs in their landfills, the USNRC felt it was important to reiterate the requirements associated with the distribution and possession of generally-licensed tritium exit signs, thus the release of the RIS.

Some of those requirements apply to the generally licensee that purchases exit signs, so let us reiterate them here. Just because a specific license is not needed for that purchase, a general licensee is nonetheless responsible for following the applicable USNRC regulations and they are subject to the same inspection and enforcement activities required of specific licensees. The bottom line is that tritium exit signs must be disposed of as instructed by the distributor (i.e., transferred to another licensee, to a licensed waste broker, or to a licensed low-level waste disposal facility), or the general licensee will pay the piper. Losing track of a sign is not, we repeat IS NOT, an approved disposal option. No ifs, ands or buts about this one folks.

The IEM e-Newsletter, Vol. 12-06, December 22, 2006

A monthly announcement of interesting radiation-related developments from Integrated Environmental Management, Inc. (IEM)

Things you can do at home or at work to save energy!

Save money and the environment!!

1. Get an Energy Audit. Most utility companies provide - usually at little or no cost.
2. Change all incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent. The new bulbs will last much longer and reduces solid wastes being deposited into landfills. The new generations of fluorescent bulbs look much like their incandescent counterparts. The major home centers carry these items.
3. Insulate your hot water heater - give it a blanket of insulation. The major home centers carry these items. Read the manufacturer's owner manual to be sure that this is a good fit with your make and model.
4. Install a digital thermostat to control heating and cooling settings. If your building is not occupied during the day (home) or night (office) the digital thermostat can be set accordingly. Additionally, most utility rate structures have peak and off-peak rates - set the thermostat to take advantage of the off-peak rates.
5. Purchase "Green Power" from your local utility - Most utilities have contracts with wind, hydro, and/or solar energy producers. You can sign up to purchase these products for your entire usage or at a certain percentage level (i.e. 50%). This is an easy way to support the operation and development of green energy sources. It may cost a little more; however, if you initiate the above actions the overall costs can be lower!

Questions? Contact Will Freeman or Bernie Denno at 301 713-2870.



ERGONOMICS

by: Ben Bond, PA

Feel it in your bones:

Be aware of ergonomic hazards at work

There is more to ergonomics than getting a good office chair. All workers in all industries are vulnerable to injury due to poor ergonomics and repetitive stress on the body.

These injuries may not be fatal, but they can result in chronic injury, missed days of work and reduced productivity.

Take a proactive approach to ergonomics in the workplace. Identify the risks in your daily routine, and take steps to alleviate the stresses on the body.

Ergonomic Risks

- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, due to inadequate wrist support at computers and repetitive motion also called **Muscular Skeletal Disorders (MSDs)**.
- Back strain, due to inadequate seating support, long hours standing on hard surfaces, and heavy lifting.
- Eye strain due to harsh or poor lighting, computer glare and monitor distance and back.

Celebrating



A Safe



Work Place



Tips for Prevention

- At your desk, take time to adjust your chair, keyboard and monitor to suit you. Your chairs should have good back support; keyboards should be placed so wrists are in a neutral position; computer monitors should be at or slightly below eye level.
- Prevent eyestrain by avoiding glare. Use matte finishes or indirect lighting. Encourage regular eye exams.
- If seated for long periods of time, shift your posture regularly; take short breaks to get up and move around.
- If your job requires you to stand for long hours on hard surfaces, request anti-fatigue mats to relieve the strain on your legs and feet.

Take a proactive approach to ergonomics in the workplace. Identify the risks in your daily routine, and take steps to alleviate the stresses on the body.

- Keep frequently used equipment, parts or materials within easy reach to avoid bending or straining.
- Practice proper lifting techniques, and use trucks, carts, or dollies whenever possible.
- Choose power tools over manual tools whenever possible. Next best solution is hand tools with cushioned grips, with the handle size matched to the user and the task.
- Avoid repetitive motion injuries by mixing it up; use task rotation, short breaks, vary the pace and even job rotation to reduce stresses through repetition.
- Environmental factors in your workstation to consider is the lighting in your workstation adequate for tasks you perform.
- Is your computer display screen free of glare and reflections from windows or overhead lights.
- Is your computers' monitor screen set at the right angle to windows to prevent glare.
- Room temperature at your work station constantly between 70 - 73

President Bush Signs New Executive Order

On January 24, 2007, President Bush signed Executive Order (EO) 13423 – “Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management”. This new EO builds upon many years of prior success within the government and provides an integrated environmental and energy management strategy. At the core of the EO are a set of aggressive goals:

EO 13423 GOALS:

ALTERNATIVE FUEL USE: Increase alternative fuel consumption at least 10% annually.

BUILDING PERFORMANCE: Construct or renovate buildings in accordance with sustainability strategies, including resource conservation, reduction and use; siting; and indoor environmental quality.

ELECTRONICS MANAGEMENT: Annually, 95% of electronic products purchased must meet Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) standards where applicable; enable Energy Star® features on 100% of computers and monitors; and reuse, donate, sell, or recycle 100% of electronic products using environmentally sound management practices.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: Reduce energy intensity by 3 % annually through 2015 or by 30% by 2015.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: Implement EMS at all appropriate organizational levels.

GREENHOUSE GASES: Reducing energy intensity by 3% annually or 30% by 2015, reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

RENEWABLE POWER: At least 50% of current renewable energy purchases must come from new renewable sources (in service after January 1, 1999).

PETROLEUM CONSERVATION: Reduce petroleum consumption in fleet vehicles by 2% annually through 2015.

POLLUTION PREVENTION: Reduce use of chemicals and toxic materials and purchase lower risk chemicals and toxic materials from top priority list.

PROCUREMENT: Expand purchases of environmentally-sound goods and services, including biobased products.

VEHICLES: Increase purchase of alternative fuel, hybrid, and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles when commercially available.

WATER CONSERVATION: Reduce water consumption intensity by 2% annually through 2015.

SECO has been appointed as the focal point for coordinating NOAA’s compliance with the new Order, and will coordinate their efforts through the existing NOAA Facilities Committee, Safety and Environmental Compliance Committee & Council, and DOC’s Environmental & Energy Managers .

If you want to learn more about this new EO, and NOAA’s energy stewardship efforts, please visit the following website: http://www.seco.noaa.gov/Energy/Energy_Regulations.html ; or contact Will Freeman in the SECO office at 301-713-2870 x-111.

January 24, 2007
President Bush
signs Executive
Order (EO) 13423
– *Strengthening
Federal Environ-
mental, Energy,
and Transportation
Management.*

Revoking EOs:
13101, 13123,
13134, 13148,
13149



If at first you do succeed - try to hide your astonishment.

~ Author Unknown

Reporting of NEAR-MISS events

All of us have experienced near miss accidents that could have been life threatening had not the event made a minor change in distance or timing. These near misses are truly accident events without injuries.

All accidents are comprised of a series of events that occur at a particular time and place. Accidents with personal injuries are the end result when a person is involved in the process.

To prevent these accidents from recurring, we usually analyze that series of events and modify one or two elements of this series so these incidents will not occur in the future.

All NOAA folks know to report all incidents where an injury is involved. This is usually accomplished by entering the initial data into the web based NOAA Incident Reporting System. However, only a handful of 'near miss' incidents are ever reported on an annual basis.

Because 'near miss' incidents are as important to analyze before an injury is sustained, they should be reported as an incident using the NOAA Incident Reporting System.. Also remember that all incidents must be reported within 24 hours; 8 hours if it's designated as serious.

We learn as much from analyzing 'near-miss' events as any other incident.



NOT A BAD IDEA

Put your car keys beside your bed at night. If you hear a noise outside your home or someone trying to get in your house, just press the panic button for your car. The alarm will be set off and the horn will continue to sound until either you turn it off or the car battery dies. This tip came from a neighborhood watch coordinator.



Next time you come home for the night and you start to put your keys away, think of this: It's a security alarm system that you probably already have and requires no installation. Test it. It will go off from most everywhere inside your house and will keep honking until your battery runs down or until you reset it with the button on the key fob chain. It works if you park in your driveway or garage. If your car alarm goes off when someone is trying to break in your house, odds are the burglar or rapist won't stick around.... after a few seconds all the neighbors will be looking out their windows to see who is out there and sure enough the criminal won't want that.

And, remember to carry your keys while walking to your car in a parking lot. The alarm can work the same way there..... This is something that should really be shared with everyone, male or female. Maybe it could save a life or prevent a sexual abuse crime. Would also be useful for any emergency, such as a heart attack, where you can't reach a phone.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of the Safety and Environmental Compliance Office (SECO). It will be produced on a quarterly basis and posted on <http://www.seco.noaa.gov/> to help increase awareness of the environmental, safety and health programs. If you have any questions or comments, please contact SECO at (301)713-2870.